

# Child Protection Policy



mackdonald language academy  
Kilkenny, Ireland

updated:  
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## Contents

1. Child Protection Policy Statement
2. Context of Policy
3. Good practice guidelines
4. Safe recruitment
5. Management of staff and volunteers
6. Keeping parents /guardians informed
7. Confidentiality statement
8. Code of behaviour and best practice
9. Role of child protection officer
10. Reporting procedures in respect of child abuse
11. Procedures for allegations against staff
12. Complaints procedure
13. Record keeping

## **Appendix**

### **Forms**

1. Parental/Guardian consent form
2. Standard form for reporting child protection and/or welfare concerns to a HSE
3. Personal disclosure form
4. Inter organisational form stating that Garda Vetting has been obtained
5. Incident report form
6. Accident report form
7. Reference Form
8. Confidentiality Agreement
9. Volunteer Application form
10. Acceptance of mackdonald's Child Protection Policy
11. Complaints form

### **Supporting Information**

12. Recognising child abuse (Children First guidelines)
13. Information on Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act
14. Relevant contact details

### **Policies and Procedures**

15. Anti Bullying Policy when working with children/young people
16. Trips away from home
17. Good practice guidelines for youth exchanges
18. Volunteer recruitment procedures
19. Volunteer recruitment chart
20. Dealing with a disclosure of abuse

## **Child Protection Policy Statement**

mackdonald language academy (mla) is committed to the provision of quality English language and cultural programmes in a manner that ensures the safety and welfare of its students.

Staff and volunteers recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the practices which cause harm to young people.

It is important to ensure that normal practices and behaviour within our organisation actively promote delivery of excellent services to students as individuals in a safe engaging environment, where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

We will adhere to the 'Children's First Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children' by having and implementing child protection policies and procedures.

We have implemented procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour and good practice
- Reporting procedures and responsibilities
- Confidentiality statement
- Safe recruitment, selection and induction procedures
- Safe management and supervision of all staff
- Parental/guardian involvement and sharing of information
- Incidences of poor practice and allegations against staff
- Complaints and comments procedures
- Accidents Procedures
- Procedures for travel
- Role of the Child Protection Officer
- Record Keeping

**This policy will be reviewed and revised if necessary.**

Kilkenny, 12.04.2019

Isha McDonald  
Child Protection Officer  
mackdonald language academy

## CONTEXT OF THE POLICY

### *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN in 1989 and ratified by Ireland in 1992. The National Children's Strategy is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and as such, sets out the vision for children in Ireland over a ten-year period. We believe that all work with children and young people should, by its very nature, recognise, implement and promote the fundamental tenets of the Convention.

The Child Care Act, 1991 defines a child as someone under 18 years of age who is not married. The UN Convention defines a child as someone under 18 years of age and the National Children's Strategy in Ireland, similarly defines a child as someone less than 18 years of age, who is not married.

### *Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999*

The Children First Guidelines were issued by the Department of Health and Children in 1999 and outline procedures, which all organisations dealing with children and young people should put in place. They state that all such organisations should put in place a child protection policy tailored to their specific needs. This policy should outline the procedures and arrangements in place to protect children in line with "Children First". Equally, the policy will provide protection for staff in CRYS in their work with children.

### *Our Duty to Care*

*Our Duty to Care* was published by the Department of Health and Children in October 2002. It offers a practical guide to staff and volunteers who work with children by outlining a number of fundamental principles of good practice.

### *National Children's Strategy*

The overall vision of this strategy is; '*An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.*'

## Good Practice Guidelines

Safe practice is essential in our work and we have put in place the following procedures to govern our work with children and young people:

- All staff/volunteers are aware of the good practice guidelines and are familiar with the overall child protection policy
- Children and young people involved with mla are informed of our guidelines and procedures
- Parents of children involved with mla are also informed of our guidelines and procedures
- mla has appointed a 'Child Protection Officer' to deal with any complaints or issues arising which concern the safety or welfare of any child/young person are involved with mla. This person is appropriately trained and familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation, concern or disclosure of child abuse

- mla has put in place an anti bullying policy
- mla has put in place a complaints procedure
- When involving children/young people with mla projects the following information/ documentation is requested by mla in relation to each child/young person attending the event/ meeting:
  - ✓ A Parental Consent Form - particularly for events involving long distance travel or overnight stays; (see DCF)
  - ✓ Contact details for the family/guardians, including emergency contact numbers
  - ✓ All relevant medical information
  - ✓ Information relating to any special needs which the child or young person may have
- An appropriate ratio of adults to young people is put in place activity. The ratio may vary depending on the particular situation, the age of the participants and their dis/ability or other special needs.
- All adults working with young people directly, including those providing overnight supervision, will have received Garda vetting.
- Staff/volunteers show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of the children and young people
- Inappropriate behaviour/language by the children/young people will not go unchallenged
- A system is in place for recording any incidents or accidents while the child/young person under the supervision of mla
- There are clear channels of communication and access to staff at mla if parents/guardians or children/young people wish to voice their concerns if there is something they are not happy about
- mla will make every effort to ensure that during its activities, the physical surroundings will be comfortable, fully accessible and appropriate activity being undertaken
- mla respects and promotes the principles of equality and diversity and works with all children in a culturally sensitive way within the context of the Irish constitution and law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **Management of Staff and Volunteers**

### **Induction**

mla is committed to make all new employees feel welcome and provide them with all the assistance needed for a smooth workplace induction. Induction training for any new staff/volunteer will include training on the mla Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour.

We will introduce a pro-active equality approach in job induction programmes for new employees, as well as, undertake awareness raising and equality skills training activities with existing staff.

We will take steps to ensure that employees, for whom English is not their first language, understand workplace rules and procedures. The equality committee will explore necessary adjustments with employees who have disabilities, to access any necessary advice or support and to secure implementation of such adjustments.

Staff will be provided with information to increase their understanding of adaptations and adjustments required in the process of recruitment and the continued employment of employees with disabilities.

### **Training**

All staff of the mla will be expected to participate in relevant training from time to time. Those working directly with children/young people must have received some training on the issue of child protection.

mla will co-ordinate the training needs of all staff, students and volunteers in relation to Child Protection.

Where young people, under 18 years, are assisting in the work of mla, they will receive appropriate information on the mla Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour at a level suitable to their age and experience. These young people will always work in partnership with or under the supervision of an adult.

Induction training for any new staff will include training on the mla Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour. All staff, students, volunteers whether temporary or permanent are required to sign up to the Child Protection Policy.

It is recognised that on-going study and training will enhance the job performance of staff. Paid leave and financial assistance towards the cost of relevant short seminars and training courses will, within reason, be granted (see Staff Handbook for details).

### **Keeping parents / guardians informed**

mla will keep parents and guardians informed of all aspects of the programme that their child is involved in.

It is our policy to share information relating to the programme of activities, trips away, transport to and from events, etc. with the parents/guardians.

Parents / carers of young people are informed of programmes and all related concerns in information about programme activities sent with the parental consent form.

In any event which requires information to be shared with the HSE or the An Garda Siochana, parents should be notified unless doing so is likely to endanger the young person.

A full copy of the mla Child Protection policy is available on request.

Information about mla and its activities is also available through its website.

Information leaflets and notices are available at our premises.

Parents are reminded and encouraged to contact local mla staff or mla head office for any further queries:

mackdonald language academy  
The Village Campus  
Waterford Road  
Kilkenny, Co.KK  
Ireland  
R95 RR27



## **Confidentiality Statement**

It is vital that the Child Protection Procedures and Policies of mla at all times operate a strict code of confidentiality.

Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful. All staff and volunteers must adhere to mla Confidentiality Statement.

In relation to informing parents/guardians the appropriate youth worker with the support of the CPO of mla, will firstly inform parents/guardians in the event of a child disclosing any incidents of abuse unless this could put the child in danger.

Youth Work is based on trusting relationships and the sharing by young people to youth workers of personal information and problems is not uncommon.

Anyone - youth group member or adult leader - disclosing information in this context need to know in advance the limits of confidentiality and the responsibilities attached.

In matters of child abuse allegations, a youth worker/volunteer can never promise to keep secret any information that is divulged. A staff member/volunteer of mla should explain to the young person disclosing why s/he cannot keep this information secret and also explain to the young person what s/he intends to do with it.

Every effort should be made to get the young person to understand this policy and consent to it. Those working directly with a child and family should make this clear to all parties involved.

All information regarding a concern, disclosure or assessment of child abuse should be shared on "a need to know" basis in the best interest of the child and to safeguard a young person. The giving of information to relevant others, for the protection of the child, is NOT a breach of confidentiality.

It must also be clearly understood that information, which is gathered for one purpose, must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.

## Code of Behaviour & Best Practice for staff and volunteers

Good practice helps protect children and young people from harm, it also protects workers. Our code of behaviour helps minimise the opportunity for children and young people to suffer harm and helps protect our workers and volunteers against false allegations.

Formalising this code of behaviour ensures consistency and quality of practice throughout mla and ensures that all volunteers and staff are aware of what is expected of them and of what is unacceptable behaviour. This creates a safe, enjoyable and comfortable environment for the young people we work with.

The welfare of young people is paramount in all decisions, activities and programmes involving young people and children at mla.

The values which underpin mla are at the core of all their programmes. The following values are central to our approach in working with young people and are a reminder of why and how we ought to work with young people.

These help focus on best practice guidelines.

Our work is:

- **Respectful of young people** who travel to Ireland to participate in programmes at mla.
- Based on **continually improving quality** in order to develop best education possible.
- Underpinned by **mutual respect** between colleagues, clients, parents and external agencies.
- Founded on **team work and a professional approach** to our work encompassing openness and support between colleagues.
- Enhanced by a **positive approach** and pride to our work, a passion for teaching and enabling students to move forward to other things and further education.
- Based on a **providing young people with the best possible education that we can deliver.**

## Safe Practice

While we recognise that sometimes it is appropriate for staff to work on a one to one basis with a child or young person, staff/volunteers should not spend excessive amounts of time alone with an individual child/young person. Staff/volunteer leaders need to be sensitive to the potential risk of false allegations and to their personal safety, which arise when they meet alone with a young person in a room. Where it is feasible they should leave the door slightly ajar or inform another colleague that they will be alone in the room with the individual in question.

Staff / volunteer leaders are not permitted to give lifts in their cars to individual young people alone.

Staff/volunteer leaders must not become over involved or spend a great deal of time with any one person. Staff/Volunteer leaders need to be clear about the purpose and nature of their relationship with any young person e.g. is the relationship constructive in building up the independence and autonomy of a person or is it being used to satisfy some need or desire of the worker/volunteer?

Where a staff member/ volunteer leader has such a concern about the nature of a particular relationship with a young person, they should discuss it with someone competent e.g. supervisor or experienced colleague.

Similarly, long term 'helping' or 'support' relationships, which arise in one's work, should also be reviewed on a regular basis by each project. Staff/volunteer leaders/facilitators should always be respectful of the privacy of young people in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets. When present in such areas, workers are advised not to spend time alone with a young person.

When working with children who may have a disability, leaders are required to be aware of specific considerations including behavioural and communication issues, intimate care needs, access to buildings, range and choice of activities and any other matters that may need addressing. Where appropriate, specific training, including disability awareness and child protection training, should be undertaken by staff/volunteer leaders.

Staff/volunteer leaders/facilitators should also ensure in so far as is reasonably possible that buildings or facilities, which they use for activities with young people, are safe, secure and comply with insurance requirements at all times. All occupied parts of the building should be monitored and parts not in use should be isolated or secured.

Staff/volunteer leaders should always know in advance who is running/ facilitating / on duty with a group - this information/schedule should be displayed clearly for leaders.

There should be no unnecessary physical contact between an adult and a young person although there are times when for example, placing a hand on a distressed child/young person's shoulder to comfort him/her would be appropriate. Physical contact should only be in response to the needs of the child and should be appropriate to the age and the level of development of the child.

## **Inappropriate Behaviour**

Staff/volunteer leaders should be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in some contact sports with young people and exercise particular caution in areas such as swimming pools.

Staff/volunteer youth leaders should be sensitive to the fact that jokes of a sexual nature may be offensive to others and should ensure that such jokes are never told in the presence of children and young volunteers.

Staff/volunteer leaders should never touch a young person unnecessarily. This should not exclude normal expressions of warmth or happiness provided they are acceptable to all parties concerned. Physical contact should only be in response to the needs of the child and should be appropriate to the age and level of development of the child.

Staff/volunteer leaders should never physically punish or in any way be verbally abusive to a young person.

## **Disruptive Behaviour**

All staff/volunteers should ensure that there are sufficient staff/facilitators/volunteers available to:

- Ensure maximum safety, participation, learning and fun in activities.
- Anticipate and control disruptive behaviour by young people by setting clear boundaries and maintaining a group contract.

When dealing with disruptive individuals on a one-to-one basis, it is always recommended that, where possible you are accompanied by another member of staff/facilitation/volunteer team.

Keep a record of any complaints about or incidences involving workers/children/young people or parents. It is recommended that instances of disruptive/challenging behaviour which require the intervention of a youth worker/ volunteer leader and which put at risk the safety and well being of others be documented and recorded in an Incident Book (see appendix 5) set aside for this purpose. This book should be available to other workers/volunteer leaders involved with the group.

All instances of disruptive behaviour are to be reported within relevant projects. The Incident form should record:

- The programme or activity which was happening at the time
- Date of incident
- A record of what happened
- Details of who was involved
- Details of where and when it happened
- What was said if significant

- Any injury to person or property
- Details of how the situation was resolved or left

### **Trips Away From Home**

When taking young people away on trips leaders should always be attentive to matters such as:

- Adhering to mla's child protection policy and procedures primarily and that of the host / partnering organisation.
- Safety - in organising all activities, in the use buildings of facilities and when using all forms of transport.
- Insurance - ensure it is adequate to cover all aspects of the trip.
- Parental/Guardian Consent - leaders should have written consent from parents and or guardians before taking young people away on trips.
- Ensuring that they are made aware of any medical information which might be relevant e.g. allergies, medication, dietary requirements.
- Sleeping arrangements - sleeping areas for males and females should be in separate and supervised quarters and should be supervised by two (if possible) leaders of the same sex as the group, which they are supervising.

Maintaining standards and good youth work practice. In the relaxed atmosphere of a trip away from home normal boundaries and standards of behaviour can be crossed over. Experience indicates that many of the cases of alleged child abuse within the youth work setting occur during trips away.

All youth groups should have guidelines available for trips away from home (Appendix 15), including guidelines on residential trips and youth exchanges (Appendix 16). All staff / volunteer leaders should ensure that these guidelines are understood and adhered to.

### **Anti Bullying Policy**

mla will not tolerate any bullying behaviour by children / young people or adults. All complaints in relation to any incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with immediately in accordance with the mla anti-bullying policy when working with children and young people (Appendix 14). This information will form part of the induction training programme for all staff and volunteers.

### **Adult Leader to Young Person Ratio**

The minimum adult leader to young person ratio in any group should ideally be one adult per group of eight plus one other adult. Local circumstances, the age of the young people, disability considerations, safety and the nature of the activities being undertaken may require that these adult/young person ratios be even lower. When dealing with a group of mixed gender, it is important that workers have sufficient leaders to properly manage all activities for both groups.

## **ROLE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER**

The Child Protection Officer in mla has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the child protection policy of mla is promoted and implemented. A Deputy Child Protection Officer in mla will take over the responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer if they are unavailable for a significant amount of time.

The role of the Child Protection Officer involves the following duties:

- To be familiar with "Children First", National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and "Our Duty to Care", the principles of good practice for the protection of children & young people and to have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the child protection and welfare policy of mla;
- To receive reports of alleged/suspected or actual child abuse and act on these in accordance with the guidelines;
- To ensure that training is provided for all new and existing staff in mla on the child protection policy;
- To build a working relationship with the Health Service Executive (HSE), An Garda Síochána and other agencies, as appropriate;
- To ensure that supports are put in place for the young person, employees or volunteers in cases of allegations being made;
- To keep up to date and undertake relevant training on child protection policy and practice, in order to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of mla' policy and procedures in this area;
- To review mla policy and procedures on child protection on an annual basis and amend as appropriate;
- To ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues.

### **Child Protection Officer**

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### **Deputy Child Protection Officer**

Alexander Mack

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## **Reporting Procedure in Respect of Child Abuse**

mla has put in place a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse.

### **Definition and Recognising Child Abuse**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Definitions of the four types of abuse, how to recognise abuse and an explanation of “reasonable grounds for concern” are included in Appendix ten, which is based on “Children First - National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children”.

### **Responsibility to Report Child Abuse**

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be experiencing abuse or have been abused in the past. This is an important responsibility for staff and volunteers when working with children and young people.

### **The guiding principles in regard to reporting children abuse are summarised as follows:**

- The safety and well-being of the child or young person must take priority
- Reports should be made without delay to the HSE
- While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, children or parents should not be interviewed in detail about the suspected abuse.

### **The reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse is outlined in the following steps:**

- The employee or volunteer who has received a disclosure of child abuse or who has concerns of abuse, should bring it to the attention of their Senior Youth Worker and in turn to the Child Protection Officer immediately.
- The Child Protection Officer will assess and review the information that has been provided. The CPO may contact the HSE for informal advice relating to the allegation, concern or disclosure.
- After consultation with the HSE officials, the Child Protection Officer will then take one of two options:
  - Report the allegation, concern or disclosure to the HSE or
  - Not make a formal report to HSE but keep a record of the concerns on file. The reasons for not reporting the allegation, concern or disclosure will be clearly recorded. The employee/volunteer who made the initial report will be informed if a formal report is not being made to the HSE and it is open to him/her to make a formal report themselves, directly to the relevant authority if they feel this is necessary.

- Where a formal report is made the HSE will then liaise with An Garda Síochána. It is likely that the HSE will want to speak to the person who first made the report to clarify facts and the circumstances of the report.

### **In an emergency a report should be made directly to An Garda Síochána.**

In making a report on suspected or actual child abuse, the individual must ensure that the first priority is always for the safety and welfare of the young person and that no young person is ever left in an un-safe situation.

Parents/guardians of the child will be informed of the allegation, concern or disclosure unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

#### *Information required when making a report*

The more information which is gathered and put together on the Standard Reporting Form (see Appendix two) the easier it will be to assess an allegation, concern or disclosure of abuse. Reports, which are made anonymously, will be followed up but this may take longer and will make it more difficult for the professionals involved to assess the situation.

If a person is unsure about the case, it may be useful to talk over the issue with the Child Protection Officer or with a HSE worker before making an official report.

### **Confidentiality**

In matters of child abuse, an employee/volunteer should never promise to keep secret, any information which is divulged. It should be explained to the young person that this information cannot be kept secret but only those who need to know, will be told.

It is essential in reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum.

### **The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998**

This Act provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Child Protection Officer, the HSE or An Garda Síochána (see Appendix 12 for further details).

Procedure for dealing with a disclosure of abuse is contained in Appendix 19.



## **Procedures for Allegations of Abuse against Staff**

When an allegation of abuse is made against an employee of mla, there are two procedures that mla will put in place:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child / young person
2. The procedure for dealing with the employee

### **1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child / young person**

In the case of the allegation being against the employee of mla, the same person will not deal with both the young person and the alleged abuser.

The Child Protection Officer of mla will follow the normal reporting procedure in mla (as outlined in 'Reporting procedure in respect of child abuse').

It will be the responsibility of the Director of mla to deal with a Staff member/volunteer against whom an allegation has been made.

### **2. The procedure for dealing with the employee**

If an allegation is made against an employee of mla, the following steps will be taken:

The Director of mla will deal with all aspects of the case relating to the employee. (Employee of mla can mean a person in paid employment, volunteers, students on placement/or volunteer students).

The allegation will be assessed by the CPO to establish if there are reasonable grounds for concern and whether a formal report will be made to the statutory authorities at this point. The CPO may wish to contact the HSE for advice on the issue.

The safety of the Child/Young person is the first priority of mla and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure the child is safe. The measures taken will be proportionate to the level of risk.

mla will ensure that no other children/young people are at risk during this period and will inform other agencies or parents/carers as appropriate.

The measures which can be taken to ensure the safety of children and young people can include the following:

- Suspension of duties of the person accused
- Re-assignment of duties where the accused will not have contact with children/young people
- Working under increased supervision during the period of investigation, probation or other measures deemed appropriate by the Director of mla

If a formal report is being made, the Director of mla will notify the employee that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is.

The employee has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained.

mla will ensure the principle of “natural justice” will apply whereby a person is considered innocent until proven guilty.

mla will work in co-operation with the HSE and An Garda Siochana and any decisions or actions to be taken in regard to the employee will be taken in consultation with these agencies.

The person against whom the allegation is made will need support during this period and mla will provide advice on how to access the relevant support services.

In relation to informing parents/guardians/carers the CPO or the most appropriate staff member of mla will firstly inform parents/guardians/carers in the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse, unless this could put the child in danger.

## **Complaints procedure in relation to working with children/young people**

mla is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all children/young people with whom we work. We also try to ensure that children/young people have a positive and enjoyable experience when working with mla.

This complaints procedure aims to cover any situation which may arise, when children/young people or their parents/guardians are not happy with the way the children/young people were treated while they were in mla, working with mla or at an event/activity run by mla or another organisation on behalf of mla.

Complaints can be made by:

- Children/young people involved with mla
- Their parents/guardians
- mla staff and volunteers/students
- Other advocates on behalf of children/young people

### **Making a complaint**

If the complaint is in relation to the safety and welfare of children/young people the complaint should be made to the Child Protection Officer, in mla.

Other complaints should be made to the person with whom the child/young person dealt with. If you prefer, you can make this complaint to the head of the relevant section/programme in mla.

Protocol for staff in receiving a complaint: a complaint – oral or written – should contain factual information re: incident with the Name of the worker in question. The staff member should insure that this information is passed on to the senior worker in the project.

### **Information required**

Complaints can be made orally or in writing (see appendix 10.1). By providing the following information you can help to speed up the investigation of your complaint.

- The name and address of the child/young person affected and the project which they were working on
- If the complaint is being made by a parent/guardian or other adult, the name and address of the parent/guardian or other adult;
- Exactly what you are dissatisfied with;
- The name of the staff member(s) who dealt with you.
- If your complaint is complicated, you may find it best to put it in writing so that no important detail is overlooked. Remember to send us copies of all relevant documentation/correspondence that you may have.

- If you have special needs that may affect your ability to make a complaint, please let us know at the earliest opportunity. We will make every effort to assist you.

### **Standards for dealing with complaints**

- If the complaint relates to the safety and welfare of a child/young person, it will be examined in accordance with good practice in relation to the safety and welfare of children/young people;
- We will treat your complaint properly, fairly and impartially and in the best interests of the child/young person;
- We promise that making a complaint will have no implications for your dealings with mla;
- All records of complaint will be passed on to the Regional Director of mla;
- We will examine and review your complaint and send a reply to you within 20 working days of the receipt of your complaint. Where it is not possible to meet this target, we will inform you and continue to do so until the matter is resolved;
- We will apologise for any mistreatment of the child/young person, explain what happened and put it right wherever possible;
- We will change the way we do things to avoid making the same mistake in future.

### **Possibility of appeal**

If you are unhappy about the outcome of the review you can appeal the matter to the Director of mla, within a month of the review.

## Record Keeping

The Child Protection Officer is responsible for keeping the following records related to Child Protection in a locked filing cabinet.

The Child Protection Officer and the Director of mla are the only officers who have access to these records:

- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of children/young people while under the supervision of mla
- Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse
- These may records may include: follow up to any complaints, disclosure, concerns, allegations, reports to the HSE, including informal advice from the HSE, and information given to parents/guardians
- Any bullying complaints related to mla work with children/young people and the follow up action
- The Garda vetting forms will be securely stored by the Garda Vetting Officer
- Each mla programme will keep copies of the Child Protection Policy Acceptance forms
- The Director of mla will keep Personal Discloser forms, Confidentiality Agreements and Child Protection Policy Acceptance forms

APPENDIX ONE

# PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

**Details of Activity:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Description:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Start date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Duration:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cost:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Meeting Point:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Leaders:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/ Guardian,  
Please complete the following and return to the Youth Workers:

I hereby consent to (young person's name) \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the activity described above.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mobile/ Work:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Family Doctor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate if the young person suffers from any medical condition (specify any medication/s s/he may be taking) and/or any special dietary needs about which the accompanying leaders should be informed.

- Medical condition: \_\_\_\_\_  
- Medication: \_\_\_\_\_  
- Special dietary needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give permission for pictures to be taken of your child/ for the purpose of the Youth Service records and which may be used on reports or publications in the future?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

While every effort will be made to contact you in case of an emergency, your permission is needed for the youth worker to act on your behalf in the event that you cannot be contacted.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**-- Private and Confidential --**

**Standard Form (sample) For Reporting Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns to the Health Service Executive (HSE)**

**In case of emergency or outside HSE hours, contact should be made with An Garda Síochána.**

To Principal Social Worker/Designate: \_\_\_\_\_ *This will be printed as relevant to each Community Care Area.*

**1) Details of Child:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

**1a) Name of Mother:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Mother if different to Child:

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**1b) Name of Father:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Father if different to Child:

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**1c) Care and custody arrangements regarding child, if known:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**1d. Household Composition:**

Name	Relationship to Child	Date of Birth	Additional Information

*Note: A separate report form must be completed in respect of each child being reported.*

**2) Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s), dates, times, who was present, description of any observed injuries, parent's view(s), child's view(s) (if known).**

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**3) Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

**4) Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child:**

Social Workers: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Public Health Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_ Gardaí: \_\_\_\_\_

GP: \_\_\_\_\_ Pre-School / Crèche / Youth Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

Other relevant information: \_\_\_\_\_

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**5) Are Parents/Legal Guardians aware of this referral to the Social Work Department? Yes / No**

If yes, what is their attitude? \_\_\_\_\_

**6) Details of Person Reporting Concerns:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature and extent of contact with Child/Family: \_\_\_\_\_

**7) Details of Person completing form:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Guidance Notes:**

The HSE area Boards have a statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act, 1991, to promote the welfare and protection of children in their area.

HSE Area Boards therefore have an obligation to receive information about any child who is not receiving adequate care and/or protection.

This reporting form is for use by:

- HSE Personnel
- Professionals and individuals in the provision of child care services in the community who have service contracts with the HSE
- Designated person in a voluntary or community agency
- Any professional, individual or group involved in services to children who becomes aware of a child protection or welfare concern, or to whom a child protection or child welfare concern is reported.

Please fill in as much information and detail as is known to you. (HSE personnel should do this in consultation with their line manager). This will assist the Social Work Department in assessing the level of

risk to the child, or support services required. If the information requested is not known to you, please indicate by putting a line through the question.

It is likely that a social worker will contact you to discuss your report.

The HSE Area Boards aim to work in partnership with parents. If you are making this report in confidence you should note that the HSE cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality as:

- A Court could order that information be disclosed
- Under the Freedom of Information Act, 1997, the Freedom of Information Commissioner may order that information be disclosed

You should also note that in making a 'bona fide report' you are protected under the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.

If you are unsure if you should report your concerns, please telephone the duty social worker and discuss your concerns with him/her.

## -- Private and Confidential --

# Personal Disclosure Form

**For all staff, volunteers & students on placement wishing to work with young people affiliated to mackdonald language academy.**

I have never been convicted of an offence in relation to the abuse of children or young people.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

There is no charge pending against me in relation to the abuse of children or young people.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound Over Order? **Yes / No**

If yes, please state the nature and date(s) of the offence(s) :

\_\_\_\_\_

I have never been involved in behaviour or activity that would render me unsuitable to work with children and/or young people.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

*Particulars of Applicant to be completed by mla Staff Member*

Name of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No. (Mobile): \_\_\_\_\_ (Home): \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteering for which Project / Group:

\_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX FOUR**

# **Inter-organisational form stating that Garda Vetting has been obtained**

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

First name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

I have received Garda vetting in the past 18 months in relation to my current work with children/young people  Yes /  No

This vetting was completed on \_\_\_\_\_.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

This section to be completed by the organisation, which obtained the Garda vetting for the individual named above.

I confirm that this person has received Garda vetting to work with children/young people in the past 18 months.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# **INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

*(To be completed as soon as possible after the accident)*

**Youth project/service name:**

*1. Details of person reporting incident:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job title/position: \_\_\_\_\_

*2. Persons(s) involved in incident: (Use continuation sheet if necessary)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age and gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age and gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

*3. Details of the incident: (Describe the nature of the incident (Use continuation sheet if necessary):*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What exactly happened: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident:      Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

*4. Specify the activity where the incident took place:*

\_\_\_\_\_

*5. Where did the incident occur?*

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What follow up action was taken and by whom?

The following action was taken by: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Name and details of any witness(es) to the incident

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Job title/position: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Signed by person reporting:

Person(s) reporting: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Witness (es) to the incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date reported to project leader or management committee member: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Signed by project leader or management committee member:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Completed incident report to be held on file in youth project/service*

# ACCIDENT REPORT FORM

*(To be completed as soon as possible after the accident)*

**Youth programme/service name:**

*As insurance companies may have their own specific requirements it is essential that the youth programme/service agrees the content of the accident report form with their insurers. This is an internal and confidential document for use by the youth project/service and their insurance company.*

*1. Details of person reporting accident:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job title/position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of accident: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

*2. Persons(s) affected / injured in accident (Use continuation sheet if necessary)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age and gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age and gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

Are the young people registered member(s) of your Youth Project/Service? \_\_\_\_\_

Which group? \_\_\_\_\_

Are they employees/volunteers of the Youth Project/Service? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what position(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

*3. Details of any witness(es) to accident:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title/position: \_\_\_\_\_

*4. Specify the activity where the accident took place:*

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did the accident occur: \_\_\_\_\_

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*5. What exactly happened and what was the nature of the accident?(Use continuation sheet if necessary)*

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*6. What follow up action was taken and by whom?*

The following action was taken by: \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Signed by person reporting:

I/we declare the above to be true in every respect and I/we undertake to render every assistance in relation to this matter:

Person(s) reporting: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date reported to project leader or management committee member: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Signed by project leader or management committee member:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Sent to insurance company:

By whom: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Copy of completed Accident Report to be held on file in Youth project/service*

# -- Private and Confidential --

## Reference Form

\_\_\_\_\_ has applied to work with mackdonald language academy and has given your name as a referee.

This post involves substantial access to children and young people and as an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of children and young people; we need to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children or young people. No / Yes  
If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.

If you are happy to complete this reference form, all information contained on the form will remain confidential and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate supervisor, should they be offered a position. It is very important that this reference form accurately reflects your knowledge and experience of the named person.

How long have you known this person ? \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity ? \_\_\_\_\_

What attributes does this person have which you would consider makes them suitable to work with children and young people?

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Please rate this person on the following (Please tick)

	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Responsibility					
Maturity					
Self Motivation					
Motivation of others					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX EIGHT

# CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

### DEFINITION

Confidentiality is **"preservation of private information concerning an individual which is disclosed to a volunteer or staff member acting on behalf of the agency."**

A confidentiality agreement exists between the volunteer/student and Kilkenny International English Language School. It is necessary to ask the clients permission when using information learnt about the client in the Youth Service except in the following circumstances; if it:

- Endangers the client's own life and /or
- Seriously endangers other persons' lives and/or
- Where legal obligation exists to provide certain information

Relevant confidential information may be shared with other work colleagues when it is necessary. Confidentiality allows for discussion of the client's details - excluding the identity of the individual. Remember this information is no less confidential just because it is shared.

### Confidentiality Agreement

Due to the nature of the service provided by the agency, it is essential that all persons operating the service observe confidentiality.

Having fully read and understood the above, I the undersigned agree to abide by its terms. I understand that failure to abide by this policy could result in disciplinary procedures and/or dismissal.

Signed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# -- Private and Confidential --

## Volunteer Application Form

Applicant's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you: (Please circle)

Employed / Homemaker / Unemployed / Student / Retired /

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Work Experience:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been involved in any type of voluntary work? Yes / No

If yes, give details (Group/agency name, your role, year & duration)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever received any youth and/or community leadership training? Yes / No

If yes, please outline details below :

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time can you commit to voluntary work?

	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Sun</b>
<b>Morning</b>							
<b>Afternoon</b>							
<b>Evening</b>							

Do you have any spare time hobbies, interests or activities?

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Why do you wish to become a volunteer leader with mla?

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Are there any previous personal, employment, medical or volunteer background reasons that may be recognised at a later stage as deeming you unsuitable to work with young people? Yes / No

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Any other relevant information?

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Please provide names and addresses of two people who are well known to you and are aware of your volunteer application, whom we can contact for a reference (not relatives).

Please note that if you have a previous involvement in a voluntary / community organisation at least one of your two references must come from a senior member of that organisation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you object to us contacting either of the above without your prior permission? Yes / No

How did you learn about this volunteering opportunity?

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Acceptance of Child Protection Policy

**Declaration from all staff and volunteers working with children and young people**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read mackdonald language academy's Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour and agree to abide by its contents.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**There is no reason why I would be considered unsuitable to work with children or young people.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# Formal Complaint Procedure

**YOUR NAME, ADDRESS & CONTACT NUMBER**

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**DATE ON WHICH THE ALLEGED INCIDENT HAPPENED:**

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**LOCATION OF ALLEGED INCIDENT:**

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**NATURE OF COMPLAINT:** *(E.G. Harassment, Bullying etc.)*

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# Recognising Child Abuse

## Definition and Possible Physical and Behavioural Indicators of Child Abuse

### Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent minor or serious injuries
- Untreated illness
- Hunger, lack of nutrition, lack of hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Inadequate and inappropriate clothing
- Lack of supervision
- Low self esteem
- Lack of peer relationships

### Emotional

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Unreasonable mood and/or behavioural changes
- Aggression, withdrawal or an 'I don't care attitude'
- Lack of attachment

- Low self esteem
- Attention seeking
- Depression or suicide attempts
- Persistent nightmares, disturbed sleep, bedwetting, reluctance to go to bed
- A fear of adults or particular individuals e.g. family member, baby-sitter or indeed excessive clinginess to parents/carers
- Panic attacks

## **Physical**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries
- Torn clothing
- Bite marks burns or welts
- Bruises in places difficult to mark e.g. behind ears, groin
- Undue or unnecessary fear
- Aggressiveness or withdrawn
- Absconding frequently from home

## **Sexual**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Age inappropriate sexual knowledge given the child's age, which is often demonstrated in language, play or drawings
- Fondling or exposure of genital areas

- Hints about sexual activity
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, e.g. games/ o swimming

#### **Indicators of Abuse are Not Facts**

It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Signs must also be considered in the child's social and family context as child abuse is not restricted to any socio economic group, gender or culture. It is important to always be open to alternative explanations for possible physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

#### **Reasonable Grounds for Concern**

The statutory authorities should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of abuse or neglect would not constitute reasonable grounds of for concern.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- specific indication from the child that s/he was abused
- an account by the person who saw the child being abused
- evidence such as injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way
- an injury or behaviour, which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour
- consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

A suspicion, not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, does not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

*(Children First 1999, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3)*

## Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

This means that even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

This protection applies to organisations and to individuals. It is considered therefore that organisations should assume full responsibility for reporting suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities.

Reports to the HSE and to the Gardaí should be made by the Child Protection Officer, as per the organisation's policy and guidelines.

*Section 3 (1) of the Act states:*

*"3. (1) A person who apart from this section, would be so liable shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that-*

- (a) a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or*
- (b) a child's health development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or*

*neglected,*

*unless it is proven that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person".*

## Relevant contact details

### Child Protection Officer for mackdonald language academy:

#### Child Protection Officer

Isha McDonald

mackdonald language academy  
Kilkenny, Co.KK R95 RR27  
Phone: 087 939 5106  
Email: [isha@mackdonald.com](mailto:isha@mackdonald.com)

#### Deputy Child Protection Officer

Alexander Mack

mackdonald language academy  
Kilkenny, Co.KK R95 RR27  
Phone: 087 139 1378  
Email: [alex@mackdonald.com](mailto:alex@mackdonald.com)

### Child Protection Social Work Services:

Kilkenny Social Work Office, 11 Patrick Street, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny Tel: 056 7784782

Laois Social Work Department, Child and Family Centre, Portlaoise, Co. Laois Tel: 057 8692567

### An Garda Síochána:

Kilkenny Garda Station, Dominic Street, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny Tel: 056 7775000 / Emergency: 999

# Anti-Bullying Policy

## when working with children/young people

### What is bullying?

Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others.

Examples of bullying include:

- Sarcasm
- Teasing
- Taunting
- Threatening
- Hitting
- Extortion
- Exclusion

Bullying contains 7 key features. These are:

- An intention to be hurtful
- This intention is carried out
- The behaviour harms the target
- The bully overwhelms the target with his/her power
- There is often no justification for the action
- The behaviour repeats itself again and again
- The bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the target

The more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse. Bullying can only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so.

#### *Policy on Bullying when working with children/young people*

mla will not tolerate any bullying behaviour by children/young people or adults and will deal with any incidents immediately in accordance with this policy.

This policy covers:

- Children/young people bullying other children/young people
- Adults bullying children/young people
- Children/young people bullying adults

The policy is as follows:

- All children/young people and adults who participate in activities run by mla will be treated with dignity and respect by adults and by other children/young people and will not be subject to bullying.
- All children/young people and adults who participate in activities run by mla have a responsibility to treat other children/young people and adults with dignity and respect and refrain from bullying behaviour.
- It will be made clear to all children/young people and adults participating in mla events/activities that bullying is not acceptable and that other children/young people and adults should be treated with dignity and respect.
- There will be adequate supervision by mla staff/volunteers at all events/activities involving children/young people. This will help to prevent bullying.
- mla staff/volunteers will monitor all events/activities run by the Youth Service involving children/young people to ensure that no bullying is taking place.
- If any mla staff/volunteer witnesses bullying or suspects that bullying is taking place he/she will follow the procedure outlined below.
- If a child/young person witnesses bullying or suspects that bullying is taking place he/she should report it to a mla staff member /volunteer. The mla staff member/volunteer will follow the procedure outlined below.
- If a child/young person is the victim of bullying he/she should report it to a mla staff member/volunteer who will follow the procedure outlined below.



## Procedure for dealing with bullying

- All reports of bullying will be recorded, investigated and dealt with by an appropriate mla staff member or other staff/volunteer.
- The mla staff member who has received the complaint or witnessed the bullying will consult with the mla Child Protection Officer, if present or the most senior mla staff member present to decide who is the most appropriate person to follow up on the complaint.
- The staff member dealing with the complaint will keep a record of the alleged bullying incident/s and the investigation and action taken.
- The staff member dealing with the complaint will speak separately to all involved in order to get all sides of the story. The staff member should also speak to others who may have witnessed the incident/s, if appropriate. The staff member will interview all involved in a calm manner and will seek answers to what, where, when, who and why.
- If the victim of the alleged bullying is a child their parent/guardian will be informed of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation.
- If the perpetrator of the alleged bullying is a child their parent/guardian will be informed of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation.
- If the perpetrator of the alleged bullying is an adult, the Regional Director of mla will be informed of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation.
- If the staff member dealing with the complaint concludes that bullying has not taken place, the following action will be taken:
  - The complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator/s will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and the reasons why it was concluded that bullying did not take place
  - Support will be given to the complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator/s if necessary
  - A meeting will be arranged between the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator to discuss the issues involved if both are agreeable and it is deemed appropriate
- If the staff member dealing with the complaint concludes that bullying has taken place, the following action will be taken:
  - The complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator/s will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and the reasons why it was concluded that bullying took place
  - Support will be given to the victim
  - A meeting will be arranged between the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator to discuss the issues involved if both are agreeable and it is deemed appropriate

- A meeting will be held with the perpetrator to discuss the bullying behaviour. They will be informed of the disciplinary action, which will be taken as a result of this bullying behaviour.

### *Disciplinary action*

When the inquiry into the alleged bullying incident has taken place and it has been concluded that bullying occurred, it will be necessary to take some disciplinary action against the perpetrator of the bullying. The disciplinary action should be agreed between at least two staff members of mla and should be appropriate to the seriousness of the incident/s.

If the perpetrator of the bullying is a child/young person, the parent/guardian of the child/young person and the child/young person will be informed of the disciplinary action which will be taken. If the perpetrator of the bullying is an adult the following people will be informed of the disciplinary action, which will be taken:

- The Regional Director of mla
- The perpetrator

The options for disciplinary action include:

- For serious incidents involving children/young people, sending the child/young person home and not allowing them to participate in any further mla events/activities
- For less serious incidents involving children/young people, allowing the child/young person to continue to participate in the event/activity once they have apologised to the victim and stated that they would not engage in any further bullying behaviour. Their behaviour would then be closely monitored
- Providing support to the child/young person to get them to understand that their behaviour is not acceptable and monitoring their behaviour;
- For serious incidents involving a member of mla, transferring the person out of the Youth Service or transferring them to an area within the Youth Service where they will not have any dealings with children/young people. All actions taken in relation to mla staff will be in accordance with the mla Staff Handbook.
- For offences involving staff/volunteers from other organisations, informing their organisation of the offence and not working with that staff member or volunteer again.

## ACTIVITIES INVOLVING TRIPS/ OVERNIGHT STAYS AWAY FROM HOME

Where the activities involve staying away from home overnight a number of additional concerns need to be taken into account. In all cases of residential work with young people, mla follows the guidelines below:

### *General guidelines*

- Adequate and safe transport arrangements will be made
- There will be adequate insurance cover for the activities being undertaken
- Parent/guardian consent will be obtained for each participant, prior to the trip, including information on each participant about the following:
  - Contact details of parent/guardian and another person named by the parent/guardian in the event of the parent/guardian not being available in an emergency
  - All relevant medical information for the participant and consent for medical intervention, if necessary
  - Any special needs which the participant may have, including diet, medical needs, support needs etc.
- All relevant information including contact details, allergies, medicines, dietary needs etc. for the child or young person will be kept with a leader/staff member on the trip
- Parents/guardians will be fully informed of the programme or timetable for the event and will receive a copy of the programme
- Parents will be given full contact details of the centre/hotel/accommodation and also of the staff member in charge of the event
- mla will ensure that the physical surroundings are safe, comfortable, accessible and appropriate for the work being undertaken
- There will be an appropriate ratio of adults to young people at the event - this may vary depending on the age and ability of the group involved
- There will be appropriate gender based supervision for the event

- Accommodation will be provided in single sex rooms, and dormitories will not be shared with non-group members
- All staff and leaders of mla, who work on a residential event with young people, will have received Garda vetting
- mla has a system in place for recording any accidents or incidents while in the care of the Youth Service
- One staff person will be designated as the 'key contact person' for the event and parents/guardians and participants will be given contact details of this person. All complaints, concerns, etc should be directed to this person (with the exception of complaints in relation to the safety and welfare of the young people)
- Parents/guardians will also be given the contact details of mla main office. Complaints in relation to the safety and welfare of the young people should be made to the Senior Project Worker concerned. If it involves the specific Senior Youth Worker the complaint should be made to the Regional Director

#### *Code of behaviour for events*

- All staff/leaders will show respect and understanding for the young people involved
- Inappropriate behaviour/language will not go unchallenged
- A list of 'ground rules' will be drawn up for each event, with the participation of the young people and these will be distributed to all participants and will be signed up to, prior to the event. The ground rules will be displayed in the meeting rooms during the event
- The privacy of the participants will be respected at all times and particularly in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets
- Participants should be encouraged to report to a staff member any cases of bullying and the staff member in charge must be made aware of this
- Staff/leaders should avoid showing favouritism towards any one participant and should ensure that the relationship is constructive and aims to build the independence and autonomy of the participants

#### *Staff Training*

Staff working on the event will have received full briefing in the following areas:

- The work and the policies of mla
- Particular skills training appropriate to the nature of the work and the specific event taking place
- Child protection training with reference to the policy of mla

# GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH EXCHANGES

Many youth services and specialist exchange organisations have issued a range of guidelines and published checklists for those wishing to participate, host or organise youth exchanges.

The purpose of this section is to summarise some of these guidelines and to highlight instances of best practice, based on previous experience of youth exchanges and residential trips away from home.

Far too often the energies of youth club members, their parents and guardians and at times, the concentration of youth club leaders and local community representatives are diverted by the organising of fundraising activities so as to ensure that the cost of such exchanges are met.

It is equally important, if not more important, that the health, safety and child protection aspects of youth exchanges and trips away from home are closely examined and agreed prior to the exchange taking place, during the youth exchange and as part of any review process.

These guidelines will be of assistance to those wishing to participate in youth exchanges and are divided into three sections.

1. *PREPARING FOR THE EXCHANGE*
2. *DURING THE EXCHANGE*
3. *EVALUATION AND MONITORING*

## 1. PREPARING FOR THE EXCHANGE

### *Partner finding*

An advance or pre-planning visit is essential. Two people if possible should undertake this task whether it is to a pre planning meeting or a visit to a proposed host organisation that may wish to undertake an exchange with your group.

Only choose a partner that meets your needs, matches your interests and is seen to be compatible with your own group.

Use a common agreement and a risk assessment checklist to assist in drawing up the formal agreement between the two groups. This will include the type and range of programme planned, the aims and objectives, the role of leaders and appointing a leader in charge.

The agreement should also contain a statement on the welfare of participants and on specific child

protection procedures. This will include adherence to your own organisation's child protection procedure even if your host partner has adopted their own child protection practices.

### *Accommodation*

During the planning stage all accommodation requirements should be thoroughly checked out. Safety issues in relation to accommodation should also be examined.

This would include the number of people allocated to rooms or dormitories, fire exits, washing facilities and the general condition of accommodation etc.

In the case of a host family they should:

- Receive the personal details of all participants
- Be aware of your organisation's child protection policy
- Receive a copy of the entire exchange programme
- Be party to a formal agreement with your group
- Have knowledge of any special medical or dietary requirements of your participants under strict confidence

Invariably, host families will have been recommended to you by a host organisation or some other local agency. Please check their suitability and where available seek references / police checks/screening relating to the host family.

Inform families where their child will be accommodated. This includes sleeping accommodation arrangements, addresses, telephone numbers and any other relevant information.

Ensure that all leaders have a complete rooming list.

When using non-home stay accommodation ensure that the building has been passed as suitable for its' use.

Single gender dormitory accommodation is an essential requirement.

Ensure that the accommodation allocated to leaders is equally appropriate.

### *Selection of participants*

Ensure you have written approval of parents/guardians for all participants under 18 years of age. All participants should complete a participant's application form.

A health form should also be completed by participants, which will contain any reference to current medication, specific medical conditions, medical allergies, doctor details and instructions on whether leaders may be permitted to administer certain medication to the young person. This form should be signed by parents/guardians.

The selection process should be clear and unambiguous. Young people should participate in the drafting of this selection process.

### *Leaders*

A leader in charge or overall leader should be appointed for each group.

All leaders should be qualified for the task that they undertake whether it is outdoor pursuit activity, water sports, indoor games or indeed first aid.

Leaders should be given clear roles and responsibilities in writing.

Newly recruited leaders should be required to fill out an application form even if it is your intention to employ them for the duration of the exchange.

Where Garda (Police) screening is available it should be availed of for all leaders.

Ensure gender and an age appropriate balance among leaders.

All leaders should have undertaken familiarisation training on the entire exchange programme and at least one leader should have advanced training in first aid.

Leaders should have access to an emergency fund or have reached agreement beforehand in the event of having to access additional funds.

Leaders should have undertaken specific child protection training, be aware of reporting procedures and have contact details for their organisation's designated child protection person.

### *Pre-Programme Planning*

The programme should have been agreed and understood by all prior to the commencement of the exchange.

Participants should undertake a familiarisation session on the exchange programme (which may include their parents/guardians).

All programmes should be structured, scheduled times and include time-off slots where appropriate. Ensure you have adequate and appropriate insurance for all stages of the activity including your planning visit.

Be satisfied that the centre(s) in use during the exchange are properly maintained and that all equipment adheres to safety standards.

Participants should all be given an information pack including a 'Help Me' card.

Participants should agree a group contact and a set of ground rules between themselves, the leaders and the host group.

### *Emergency Procedures*

The exchange leaders should have clear emergency plans and procedures agreed in advance of the programme. This will include emergency home contact details for all participants and relevant emergency contact details in the host country or in the place of residents.

Bring a fully stocked medical kit with you.

A designated leader may be required to bring prescribed medication on behalf of a participant. This needs to be agreed with the young person's parents/guardians prior to departure, as does the method and frequency of taking medication. Such permission should be sought in writing.

At least one leader should have advanced first aid training.

## **2. DURING THE EXCHANGE**

### *Documents to bring with you:*

Bring details of your insurance cover plus copies of any special indemnification required or taken out for the duration of the exchange.

Copies of the following should be made and retained by the leaders in charge in safe and confidential surroundings:

- Daily programme
- Contract between your organisation and the host organisation
- Participants application forms
- Parental/guardian consent forms
- Health forms
- Group contract
- Emergency home contact details
- Travel documentation
- Insurance details
- Child protection guidelines

### *Programme and Debriefing Meetings*

Leaders and participants should meet daily (preferably at an agreed time) to review the day's activities, act as a support group, carry out an evaluation to date and discuss the following day's programme.

Leader meetings should also take place each day to review the programme, to act as a support structure



for each other, discuss any on-going issues and to inform themselves as to any difficulties that may have arisen within the agreed programme or within their own group of participants.

Due to the intensity of their work, leaders may require additional supports and time off slots should be built in to their schedule.

Leaders should know where participants are at all times - even during free time.

Have a back-up plan if the programme needs to be amended, for whatever reason.

The host group should appoint a leader in charge or a support person to act as a liaison person throughout the exchange.

### *Orientation on arrival*

The host organisation should organise an orientation meeting within the entire group to outline and explain the following:

- Practicalities and logistics
- Programme introduction, including details of where events and activities are happening
- Cultural information, including what may be acceptable as cultural norms and what may not be acceptable
- Local contact details in case of emergencies
- The traditional 'Help Me' card, which will include all necessary telephone numbers and addresses, telephone codes, bank details, emergency contact numbers, medical contacts etc.
- The group contract and agreement to amend the contract if deemed necessary on arrival, taking local circumstances into consideration.

There should be one central information point for participants displaying information in all languages of the exchange groups.

### *Child Protection Issues*

Leaders should be fully aware as to how to deal with child protection issues if and when they arise. This involves fully familiarising themselves with their own organisation's child protection procedures and practices.

The first priority of the organisation is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. Leaders are also required to have an awareness of the host organisation's child protection procedures which is preferably gained from a local Child Protection Officer.

Leaders should have relevant contact details for the Child Protection Designated Person (in their own organisation) should they deem it necessary to contact him/her at any time.

A detailed account of any child protection issues or misdemeanours that may have arisen during the exchange should be recorded by the leaders, for future reference.

#### *Host Organisation and Families*

Agree regular review meetings throughout the exchange with your host organisation.

When using home stay accommodation meet host families regularly. Visit participants in the host family home.

Meet young people regularly and get a report on the hosting arrangements and if there are any difficulties resolve them expeditiously.

### **3. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

A system for monitoring and evaluation should be discussed and agreed prior to departure and a leader nominated to keep an ongoing record of evaluation throughout the exchange. The participants should be fully involved in any monitoring and evaluation process and the regular leader/participants meetings may be used to carry out this task.

Monitoring and evaluation should also be carried out with the host organisation, with host families and with centre staff or management.

Participants should be encouraged to keep a journal of the exchange which they may use to contribute to the evaluation process.

Carry out a full and final evaluation on returning home. Agree the contents of the evaluation report and give a copy to the participants, to your exchange partners and to any funding agency that may have assisted your exchange.

## **Dealing with a disclosure of abuse**

mackdonald language academy values and encourages the full participation of children and young people in many aspects of our work and we strive to ensure that the experience of the child/young person in our work is a happy and productive one.

In the event of a child/young person disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that this is dealt with sensitively and professionally by the staff member/volunteer involved.

The following are guidelines to support the worker/volunteer in this:

- React calmly
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you
- Do not promise to keep anything secret
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions;
- Check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Sign and date the record
- Ensure that the child/young person understands the procedures which will follow
- Pass the information to the Child Protection Officer, do not attempt to deal with the problem alone
- Treat the information confidentially